

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I would like to request that you retain the Morse code testing requirements for the amateur service, specifically to gain HF operating privileges.

I happen to operate Morse exclusively but it makes no difference to me whether another operator uses Morse or not. Keeping the Morse requirement protects the amateur service by maintaining a high level of technical and communications excellence. With the current testing scheme, many ten-year-olds could memorize a written exam from the published question pool and pass an exam. To pass a Morse test, you have to know the code. There is no way to cheat the system. By maintaining the code requirement, you further protect the hobby from being "dumbed down" and maintain the integrity of the HF bands. We are an instant gratification society. The idea of "a free lunch" cannot be allowed to creep into the amateur service.

Some have stated that the current Morse testing requirements makes it difficult for handicapped individuals to join the ranks. My response to that is that a qualified handicapped individual should have access to a medical exemption from a doctor. In the past this has been an option, although I am not aware of its current availability. If a medical exemption is no longer available, perhaps it should be available to accommodate this group.

Look at the violations that have been recorded on the VHF and UHF bands since the no-code license became available. Look at what happened to CB once it was deregulated. Some have commented that people today just don't have time to devote to the code. My response is that if they don't have time to meet the minimum requirements for the hobby, maybe they don't have time for the hobby anyway.

There is no better weak signal mode than Morse code. No digital mode or PC can ever compete with the signal processing capabilities of the human brain. In a time of need, there may be no better option than to have a working knowledge of Morse code. This is especially true now that our national infrastructure has been called into question.

If the FCC chooses to loosen the requirements on the amateur service, it will only serve to hurt the service and that, in the long run, will prove to be detrimental to the hobby as a whole. I urge you to consider this matter carefully and think about what the ramifications will be here, not based upon what other countries may be doing.

Very Sincerely Yours,

John Langridge, KB5NJD